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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND
FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE
PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES AND WAYS AND MEANS WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS
SYSTEM FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND
FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Written statement submitted by the International Movement Against All
Forms of Discrimination and Racism, a non-governmental organization on
the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which
is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council
resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[20 February 1997]

United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education

1. The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education has stepped into its third year. However, recalling its principles, we regretfully have to admit that many problems still remain with regard to achieving its aims. In order to promote a wider recognition and reaffirm and achieve its aims and principles, the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) submits the following information and recommendations to the international community.

2. NGO activities for the promotion of the Decade are considerable in Japan. With active approaches by NGOs, including the IMADR Japan Committee, the Buraku Liberation League, the National Dowa Educators Association, the Japan Teachers Union and the International Human Rights NGO Network, the Government has created a promotion committee headed by the Prime Minister and made up of representatives of 22 ministries and agencies concerned. A plan of action is now under preparation by the Promotion Committee.

3. At the local level likewise, a number of prefectures and cities have established their own promotion committees involving the governors or the mayors, and started preparation for a plan of action.

4. For public awareness, numbers of publications on the Decade have been issued and seminars and lectures have been held by NGOs all across the country. During Human Rights Week in 1996, for example, mass meetings to promote the Decade were organized in Tokyo, Osaka and Fukuoka, with, as one of the speakers, Ms. Shulamith Koenig, Director of People's Decade for Human Rights Education International (New York), which has been taking the initiative in the creation and promotion of the Decade.

5. While continuing our efforts on the NGO side, we call on the central Government and local governments to embody and implement the plans of action, if already prepared, and urge the other local governments, private companies, religious organizations, labour unions, lawyers, universities and the mass media, to establish promotion committees, prepare plans of action and take action in accordance with the plans. IMADR encourages every State immediately to take appropriate measures to promote the Decade in cooperation with NGOs and other parts of the private sector in the country, as we see in Japan.

6. In 1998, the world will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the half-way point of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. In this regard, we recommend the United Nations to convene an international conference during that special year. The conference might: review and analyse implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards and lead the trend towards the establishment of a human rights culture in various situations around the world; and review and analyse the activities carried out during the first half of the Decade and identify the course to be taken to create a human rights culture. We also strongly recommend that the conference ensure equal participation among the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations, central and local governments, international, national and local non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

7. It is equally requested that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights regularly collect information on activities to promote the Decade at all levels, including the United Nations, international, regional and national levels, for distribution among Governments and NGOs worldwide.

8. In addition, as mentioned in Commission on Human Rights resolution 1996/44, the High Commissioner for Human Rights should seek the views of States on ways and means to increase support to the Decade, with special emphasis on activities of NGOs in the field of human rights education and on the advisability of establishing a United Nations voluntary fund for this purpose.

9. Lastly, in order to eliminate discrimination, in particular against indigenous peoples and minorities, and to strengthen solidarity, programmes on human rights education at every level should emphasize the importance of intercultural education as a part of human rights education.

10. With the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approaching and the turn of the century in 2000, the IMADR calls on the Commission on Human Rights to consider the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education as a matter of priority and make every effort towards its promotion at all levels and in all fields, and to take concrete action in accordance with the Plan of Action for the Decade.
